

Historic achievement Siblings proud of new mayor of Colchester

Malaysian done good:

Chuah proudly holding the flags of Penang, Colchester town hall and the United Kingdom in this photo taken recently in Colchester following her appointment to the post of mayor. — Photo courtesy of Newsquest (Essex) Ltd



GEORGE TOWN: A Penang-born nurse, who was elected as mayor of Colchester, has made her three siblings proud of her achievement.

Helen Chuah, 61, who was Colchester Council's deputy mayor for the past year, was recently promoted to mayor.

She is said to be the first mayor in England who was not born in Britain.

Her brother Kean Huat, 60, when contacted in Kuala Lumpur, said he had sent a congratulatory card to Helen as he was unable to attend the installation ceremony tomorrow.

"None of us can attend the ceremony, including our 62-year-old eldest sister in Teluk Kumbar," he said.

Helen's other brother, Kean Chee, 58, a retiree staying in Bukit Jambul, said his sister's enthusiasm in charity work had been a source of inspiration for his two sons.

"We all still have a close relationship although she has been staying in Britain for the past 40 years.

"She maintains her ties with Malaysia by coming back every year," he said.

In fact, Helen visited her former school, St George's Girls School, two months ago and impressed the principal Shariffah Afifah Syed Abbas.

Recalling her meeting, Shariffah Afifah said Helen, who left the school in 1967, was a humble and outstanding person.

"She told me that she is willing to assist and welcome any of our students going to Britain."

Helen's story also attracted the attention of Malaysia-born Westminster City Council Chinese Community liaison officer David Tan, who said he was happy to hear the news.

Chuah first Malaysian-born mayor in Britain

PETALING JAYA: A woman who was born and raised in Penang, will take oath tomorrow to be the first non-English mayor in England.

Helen Chuah, who loves her curry *mee*, will be taking the badge and robes of the mayor's office of the city of Colchester in a ceremony held at the city's Moot Hall.

"I feel very honoured and privileged to be elected as the first non-English mayor of this historic town of Britain, and would wish to foster closer ties between Colchester and Malaysia," she told *The Star* yesterday.

"There are many Malaysian students in the University of Essex here and together with the Malaysian media presenters based in London, we hope to promote Malaysian culture, food and possible business links as well," Chuah, 61.

Chuah, who was a student at St George's Girls' School in Penang, left to train as a nurse in Britain in 1971.

"I applied to train as a nurse in England and I promised myself that I will go to the first hospital that accepts me and that turned out to be Severalls Hospital in Colchester," she said.

She entered public office as a councillor in 1998.

For the past year, she was Colchester Council's deputy mayor.

"My one regret is that my late parents will not be here to witness this ceremony. I know they would feel proud and that I have not let them down," she added.

Chuah is married to Englishman Mike Hogg, who is also a Colchester councillor.

They have a daughter Rachael Choo, who is a teacher in London.

The family regularly returns to Malaysia for holidays and to meet with friends and family.

Colchester is located about 100km north-east of London.